

GAY & LESBIAN BERLIN

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GAY & LESBIAN BERLIN

Berlin's legendary liberalism has spawned one of the world's biggest, most fabulous and diverse GLBT playgrounds. Anything goes in 'Homopolis' (and *we do* mean anything!), from the highbrow to the hands-on, the bourgeois to the bizarre, the mainstream to the flamboyant.

The closest that Berlin comes to a 'gay ghetto' is Schöneberg (Motzstrasse and Fuggerstrasse especially), where the rainbow flag has proudly flown since back in the heady 1920s. Prenzlauer Berg has the hippest gay scene in eastern Berlin. Although it is fairly well spread out across the entire neighbourhood, its hub is along Greifenhagener Strasse, Gleimstrasse and Schönhauser Allee. Kreuzberg has more of an alternative-flavoured feel (Oranienstrasse, Mehringdamm) while Friedrichshain's small but up-and-coming scene is predominantly student-driven.

Berlin's gayscape runs the entire spectrum from mellow cafés, campy bars and cinemas to saunas, cruising areas, clubs with dark rooms and all-out sex venues. In fact, sex and sexuality are entirely everyday matters to the unshockable city folks and there are very few, if any, itches that can't be quite openly and legally scratched. As elsewhere, gay men have more options for having fun, but grrrrls – from lipstick lesbians to hippie chicks to bad-ass dykes – won't feel left out.

Except for the hardcore places, gay spots get their share of opposite-sex and straight patrons, drawn by gay friends, the fabulousness of the venues, abundant eye candy and, for women in gay bars, a laid-back atmosphere.

SIGHTS

SCHWULES MUSEUM Map pp140–1

☎ 693 1172; www.schwulesmuseum.de;
Mehringdamm 61, Kreuzberg; adult/concession
€5/3; 🕒 2-6pm Sun-Fri, to 7pm Sat;
📍 Mehringdamm

Museum, archive and community centre all in one, the nonprofit Gay Museum is a great place to learn about Berlin's queer history. Special exhibits usually focus on gay icons like Greta Garbo and Oscar Wilde. The entrance is in the courtyard behind Melitta Sundström (opposite).

SHOPPING

PRINZ EISENHERZ Map p136

Books

☎ 313 9936; www.prinz-eisenherz.com, in German; Lietzenburger Strasse 9a, Schöneberg;
🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Wittenbergplatz

The 'Prince' is the source in town for gay lit, nonfiction and mags in many different languages, including, of course, English. Since moving to bigger digs, there's even a respectable lesbian section here, plus videos, DVDs, postcards as well as calendars.

BRUNO'S Map p136

Erotica

☎ 6150 0385; www.brunos.de, in German;
Bülowlstrasse 106, Schöneberg; 🕒 10am-10pm
Mon-Sat, 1-9pm Sun; 📍 Nollendorfpplatz

This gay-themed supermarket is the go-to place for all sorts of books, magazines, toys, tools, lubricants, and software and hardcore DVDs for those who worship at the altar of hedonism. There's a smaller branch in Prenzlauer Berg (☎ 6150 0387; Schönhauser Allee 131; 📍 Eberswalder Strasse).

LA LUNA Map pp154–5

Erotica

☎ 4432 8488; www.laluna-toys.de, in German;
Dunckerstrasse 90, Prenzlauer Berg; 🕒 noon-8pm
Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat; 📍 Eberswalder Strasse

This women-owned store quite literally puts 'babes in Toyland', but don't expect the PG variety. There are neatly arranged dildos, vibes, edible massage oils, chocolate body paint and other toys to tickle your fancy – or whatever.

BUTCHEREI LINDINGER Map p136

Fetish

☎ 2005 1391; www.butcherei-lindinger.de;
Motzstrasse 18, Schöneberg; 🕒 2-8pm Tue-Sat;
📍 Nollendorfpplatz

Berlin's kingdom of kinkiness is filled with sexual hardware that caters to every

GAY MEMORIALS

Although it's rarely talked about, the gay community suffered tremendously under the Nazis. They were humiliated, socially ostracised and made to wear pink triangles on their clothing. About 54,000 were imprisoned and 7000 tortured and murdered in concentration camps. A **pink-granite triangle** (Map p136) on the south façade of Nollendorfplatz U-Bahn station in Schöneberg commemorates their plight. People often leave flowers here, and not only during Pride Week.

In June 2008 the city unveiled an 'official' memorial, the **Denkmal für Homosexuelle NS Opfer** (Memorial for Homosexual Nazi Victims; Map p112; Ebertstrasse), on the eastern edge of Tiergarten park. The 4m-high, solitary, warped concrete box echoes the vast **Holocaust Memorial** (p84) across the street until you look through a window at the black-and-white looped video showing two men kissing tenderly. Less than three months after its unveiling, homophobes smashed the window, but it was quickly fixed.

There's another memorial to gay victims of the Nazis at **Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp** (p285).

conceivable fantasy and fetish, though more of the naughty than the nice kind. This is the place to go for that custom-tailored rubber suit.

DRINKING SCHÖNEBERG

HAFEN Map p136

Bar

☎ 211 4118; www.hafen-berlin.de, in German; Motzstrasse 19; ☎ from 8pm; 📍 Nollendorfplatz

An essential component of the Schöneberg party scene, the friendly Harbour is a great first stop to dock before launching into a raucous night on the razzle. On Mondays, quizmaster Hendryk tests your trivia knowledge with his hilarious Quizzorama shows (in English on the first Monday of the month).

HEILE WELT Map p136

Bar

☎ 2191 7507; Motzstrasse 5; ☎ from 6pm; 📍 Nollendorfplatz

Laid-back and dimly lit, the 'Perfect World' bar gets high marks for its flirt factor and sensuous fur-covered walls and is a great warm-up spot for the long night ahead. The stylish back lounge opens at weekends and is usually packed to the gills.

NEW ACTION Map p136

Bar

☎ 211 8256; www.new-action-berlin.de; Kleiststrasse 35; ☎ from 8pm Mon-Sat, from 1pm Sun; 📍 Nollendorfplatz

Nicknamed 'Das Loch' (the hole), this dirrrrrty place is an institution among the all-male, hardcore clubs. The army, rubber, skin, leather and biker factions distribute

across three rooms outfitted with bars, cages and other fetish toys.

TOM'S BAR Map p136

Bar

www.tomsbar.de; Motzstrasse 19; ☎ 10am-6am; 📍 Nollendorfplatz

Erotic artist Tom of Finland inspired the name of this been-here-forever bar, although you don't have to look like his subjects to feel comfortable. It's cruisy, with most people tempted to check out the labyrinthine darkroom in the cellar.

CAFÉ BERIO Map p136

Café

☎ 216 1946; www.cafe-berio.de; Maassenstrasse 7; ☎ 8am-midnight Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat; 📍 Nollendorfplatz

This two-level café serves cakes as sweet as the gooiest love letter. In business for more than half a century, its low-key but flirty Viennese-coffee-house vibe has proved an enduring gay fave.

KREUZBERG

ROSES Map pp140-1

Bar

☎ 615 6570; Oranienstrasse 187, Kreuzberg; ☎ from 9pm; 📍 Kottbusser Tor

The ultimate in camp and kitsch (check out the plastic Virgin Marys), Roses is a glittery fixture on the lesbigay Kreuzberg booze circuit. Bartenders pour with a generous elbow, making this a great wrap-up spot for hard-party nights.

MELITTA SUNDSTRÖM Map pp140-1

Café

☎ 692 4414; Mehringdamm 61; ☎ from 2.30pm; 📍 Mehringdamm

Named in honour of a legendary Berlin queen who died of AIDS in 1993, this

GAY PARTY WEEK

- Monday **Stiller Don** (below), **Greifbar** (below) and **Hafen** (p257)
- Tuesday **Ackerkeller** (right) or **Cookies** (p231)
- Wednesday **Marietta** (p260), **Berlin Hilton @ nbi** (p260) and **Zum Schmutzigen Hobby** (right)
- Thursday **Chantals House of Shame** (p260)
- Friday **Connection** (opposite) or **SchwuZ** (opposite)
- Saturday **SchwuZ** (opposite), **Berghain** (p230), also see the boxed text on p260
- Sunday **GMF** (p260)

cheerful café is busy at all hours but never more so than on Saturday nights when it's a preferred fuelling-up stop for parties at **SchwuZ** (opposite) in the back.

FRIEDRICHSHAIN

HIMMELREICH Map pp148–9 Bar
 ☎ 7072 8306; www.himmelreich-berlin.de, in German; **Simon-Dach-Strasse 36**; ☎ from 7pm Mon-Fri, from 2pm Sat & Sun; ☎ 🚫 Warschauer Strasse

Proving all those stereotypes about gays having good taste, this smart red-hued cocktail bar makes most of the competition look like a straight guy's bedsit. Tuesdays are women-only and on Wednesdays drinks are two-for-one.

PRENZLAUER BERG

GREIFBAR Map pp154–5 Bar
 ☎ 448 4503; www.greifbar.com, in German; **Wichertstrasse 10, Prenzlauer Berg**; ☎ 10pm-6am; ☎ 🚫 Schönhauser Allee

This one's a staple on the Prenzlauer Berg chill-and-chat circuit, with a mixed crowd of jeans, sneakers, leather and skin sniffing each other out in the comfortable bar with a big-screen video. When it's time to get lucky, there's a sweaty play zone in back. Drinks are half-price on Mondays.

STILLER DON Map pp154–5 Bar
 ☎ 445 5957; **Erich-Weinert-Strasse 67**; ☎ from 8pm; ☎ 🚫 Schönhauser Allee

A relic from the GDR days, 'Quiet Don' is anything but, especially on Monday nights when boy pals kick off the evening with beer, peanuts and flirty chat

before moving on to business in the cruisy **Greifbar** (left).

VILLIS Map pp154–5 Bar
 ☎ 4471 9081; **Greifenhagener Strasse 45, Prenzlauer Berg**; ☎ from 7pm; ☎ 🚫 Schönhauser Allee

At this unpretentious neighbourhood-style bar, the crowd skews older and you can actually hear yourself talk. Pick from a huge selection of beers beneath a ceiling of golden angels. Two-for-one drinks make Wednesday the busiest night. Greifbar is just across the street.

ZUM SCHMUTZIGEN HOBBY Bar
 Map pp154–5

www.ninaqueer.com, in German; **Rykestrasse 45, Prenzlauer Berg**; ☎ from 5pm; ☎ Senefelder Platz

Local trash drag deity Nina Queer presides over this louche den of kitsch and glam with décor, clientele and goings-on that aren't for the faint-of-heart (check out the porno wallpaper in the men's room). On Wednesdays at 9pm it's standing-room only for Nina's 'glamour trivia quiz'.

SCHALL UND RAUCH Map pp154–5 Café
 ☎ 443 3970; www.schall-und-rauch.de; **Gleimstrasse 23**; ☎ 9am-1am; ☎ 🚫 Schönhauser Allee

A café by day, this stylish place turns into a chic cocktail-bar-cum-restaurant when the moon gets high, with award-winning design and a following of locals and visitors. Sunday brunch is served here.

NIGHTLIFE CLUBBING

ACKERKELLER Map pp104–5
 ☎ 3646 1356; www.ackerkeller.de; **Bergstrasse 68, Mitte**; ☎ pub from 6pm Sun-Fri, parties from 9pm Tue, from 10pm Fri & Sat; 🚫 Nordbahnhof, ☎ Rosenthaler Platz

This snug and alternative lesbigay pub, run by a nonprofit group, spins into a party venue thrice weekly with rock, pop, electro and even Balkan beats keeping the dance floor grooving. Party themes include Busenfreundin (gals only), Clean Party (no booze,

no drugs) and Morrisseylicious (mope rock). Best day is Tuesday.

BERGHAIN Map pp148–9

www.berghain.de, in German; Am Wriezener Bahnhof, Friedrichshain; cover €12; ☎ Sat;

📍 Ostbahnhof

Take off your shirt and head to this vast post-industrial techno-electro hellhole filled with studly queer bass junkies. With three floors of dark and hidden corners, including labyrinthine darkrooms, there's plenty of space for mischief. See [p230](#) for the full scoop.

CLUB CULTURE HOUZE Map pp140–1

☎ 6170 9669; www.club-culture-houze.de;

Görlitzer Strasse 71, Kreuzberg; cover varies;

📍 Wed-Mon; 🕒 Görlitzer Bahnhof

This sex party palace has hot 'n' heavy themes ranging from 'Naked' Mondays to 'Balls' (underwear) Thursdays and 'Fist Factory' Fridays. Adventurous hets and bis can get in on the action on Wednesdays and Sundays. Check the website before heading out.

CONNECTION Map p136

☎ 218 1432; www.connection-berlin.de,

in German; Fuggerstrasse 33, Schöneberg;

📍 from 11pm Fri & Sat; 🕒 Wittenbergplatz

This classic gay disco was a techno pioneer way back in the '80s and still hasn't lost its grip on the scene. The labyrinth of underground darkrooms is legendary, while upstairs there are three floors of men-only action, a mirrored dance floor and blaring music.

LAB.ORATORY Map pp148–9

www.lab-oratory.de, in German; Am Wriezener

Bahnhof, Friedrichshain; 📍 Thu-Sun;

📍 Ostbahnhof

Part of the Berghain complex, this is a 'lab' for advanced sexual experimentation in what looks like the engine room of a U-boat. Party names like Yellow Facts, Fausthaus and Rubber leave little to the imagination. Check the website before heading out.

SCHWUZ Map pp140–1

☎ 629 0880; www.schwuz.de, in German;

Mehringdamm 61, Kreuzberg; cover €3-8;

📍 Fri & Sat; 🕒 Mehringdamm

This party palace is a good place to ease into the scene. Fortify yourself at [Melitta Sundström](#) ([p257](#)), then head to the basement to work the dance floors and meet friendly locals. The party roster ranges from retro hits to alternative and classic rock, drawing a wide variety of punters. On the fourth Friday it's lesbians only during L-Tunes.

SERENE BAR Map pp140–1

☎ 694 2342; www.serenebar.de, in German;

Schwibbusser Strasse 2, Kreuzberg; 📍 from 8pm

Thu, from 9pm Sat; 🕒 Platz der Luftbrücke

This cool space has a long bar and a spacious dance floor that sees lots of girl-on-girl action on Saturdays. Thursdays are more low-key chat sessions.

CINEMAS

MON-GAY @ KINO INTERNATIONAL

Map pp148–9

☎ 2475 6011; www.yorkc.de, in German;

Karl-Marx-Allee 33, Friedrichshain; tickets €6;

📍 10pm Mon; 🕒 Schillingstrasse

Homo-themed classics, imports and previews take over the [Kino International](#) ([p243](#)), where the GDR film elite once held its movie premieres. Come early for cocktails at the campy '60s-style bar.

XENON Map p136

☎ 7800 1530; www.xenon-kino.de, in German;

Kolonnenstrasse 5-6, Schöneberg; tickets €6;

📍 Julius-Leber-Brücke

Built in 1909, Berlin's second-oldest cinema is dedicated to lesbigay fare, with lots of juicy imports and themed seasons. Incongruously, kiddie films are shown in the afternoons.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

VERZAUBERT

www.verzaubertfilmfest.com, in German;

📍 Mar-Apr

Prepare to be 'enchanted' (English for *verzaubert*) by the best of international queer cinema the moment the fabulous glitter curtain opens at the [Kino International](#) ([p243](#)). Both new and established international talent gets screen time here.

EASTER IN BERLIN

www.blf.de; ☎ April

Europe's largest party for the leather, rubber, sportswear, skin and military fetish crowd whips tens of thousands of fans out of the dungeons and into the streets of Berlin. Six days of wild partying culminates in the crowning of the 'German Mr Leather'.

LESBISCH-SCHWULES STRASSENFEST

☎ 2147 3586; www.regenbogenfonds.de;

☎ mid-Jun

A warm-up for the CSD, Europe's largest gay and lesbian street fair takes over Schöneberg with nonstop bands, food, information booths and the hilarious 'Wild Sofa' live talk show.

CHRISTOPHER STREET DAY

☎ 2362 8632; www.csd-berlin.de;

☎ late Jun

Come out and paint the town pink. No matter what your sexual persuasion, everybody's welcome at one of the biggest pride parades in Europe. Expect floats filled with writhing naked torsos, transvestites strutting their stuff in campy costumes and more queens than at a royal wedding. The route varies but always ends at the Siegesäule.

LA-DIY-FEST BERLIN

www.ladyfest.net;

☎ early Aug

The Berlin edition of this community festival brings out creative and artistic

PARTY PLANNER

Some of the best club nights are independent of the venues they use and may move around, although they will usually at least have some temporary home residency. The scene in Berlin is rather fickle, though, and venues and dates may change, so make sure you always check the websites or the listings magazines for the latest scoop. There is also a thriving illegal party scene, relying on email lists or word of mouth and often using buildings outside the central districts.

- **Berlin Hilton** (www.berlinhilton.net, in German; ☎ from 11pm Wed) On hump day, 'Hiltonistas' descend upon the small and low-tech **nbi club** (p232) for a heady dance mix of electro-rock and campy singalongs. Would Paris approve?
- **Café Fatal** (www.cafefatal.de, in German; ☎ 7pm-2am Sun) All comers descend on **S036** (p235) for the ultimate rainbow tea dance that goes from 'strictly ballroom' to 'dirty dancing' in a flash. If you can't tell a waltz from a foxtrox, come at 7pm for free lessons.
- **Chantals House of Shame** (www.siteofshame.com, in German; ☎ from 11pm Thu) Party drag Chantal's legendary lair (currently at **Bassy Cowboy Club**, p229) is a beloved institution, not so much for the glam factor than for the over-the-top transvestite shows and the hotties who love 'em.
- **Gayhane** (www.so36.de, in German; ☎ last Sat of the month) Rock the kasbah when this 'homoriental' party takes over **S036** (p235) with Middle Eastern beats and belly dancing.
- **GMF** (www.gmf-berlin.de, in German; ☎ from 10pm Sun) Currently at **Weekend** (p234), Berlin's premier Sunday club is known for excessive SM (standing and modelling) with lots of smooth surfaces – and that goes for both the crowd *and* the setting. Predominantly boyz, but girls OK.
- **Irrenhaus** (www.ninaqueer.com, in German; ☎ third Sat of the month) The name means 'insane asylum' and they're not kidding. Party hostess with the mostest, trash queen Nina Queer puts on nutty, naughty shows at **Geburtstagsclub** (Map pp154–5; Am Friedrichshain 33, Friedrichshain) that are not for the faint-of-heart. Expect the best. Fear the worst.
- **Klub International** (☎ 690 4087; ☎ first Sat of the month) Huge party at the glamorous **Kino International** (p243) with three floors of sizzling dance action (different music on each) and trash drag stars like Biggy van Blond behind and in front of the decks.
- **Marietta** (☎ 4372 0646; www.marietta-bar.de, in German; ☎ Wed) The queer brigade turns this comfy retro bar (p226) into a launch pad for the Prenzlauer Berg 'hump day' party circuit that also includes Zum Schmutzigen Hobby and nbi.
- **Propaganda @ Goya** (Map p136; www.propaganda-party.de, in German; Am Nollendorplatz; ☎ Fri; ☎ Nollendorplatz) In a sexy old theatre, this New York-style party-and-a-half draws fashionable see-and-be-seeesters with its buff and bronzed go-go dancers, big sound and wild dance action.

feminists, lesbians and their friends for four days of music, art, performance and workshops.

FOLSOM EUROPE

www.folsom-europe.com; 📅 1st weekend in Sep

Consolidating Berlin's anything-goes reputation, this cavalcade of latex, leather, traps, whips and chains takes over the Schöneberg gay quarter for one weekend of kinky partying.

LESBEN FILM FESTIVAL BERLIN

☎ 852 2300; www.lesbenfilmfestival.de;
📅 Oct

For about 20 years, Berlin's Lesbian Film Festival has given international filmmakers – professional to amateur – a platform to showcase their work.

SLEEPING

All Berlin hotels are 'gay-friendly' but places listed here are especially geared to scene crawlers. For women-oriented (though not necessarily lesbian) hotels, see [Frauenhotel Artemisia](#) (p272) and [InterMezzo Hotel](#) (p266) in the Sleeping chapter.

By the time you're reading this, fashionable Axel Hotels, the world's first global gay (but self-proclaimed 'heterofriendly') boutique hotel chain, should have opened a branch in Schöneberg. Check www.axelhotels.com for updates.

ENJOY BED & BREAKFAST

Map p136 B&B €

☎ 2362 3610; <http://ger.ebab.com>; Nollendorfpfad 5, Schöneberg; s/d from €20/40; 📅 reservations 4.30-9.30pm; 📍 Nollendorfpfad

This private room-referral service caters specifically for gays and lesbians. It is affiliated with [Mann-0-Meter](#) (right), although it's easiest to make your reservations online. Check the website, it has all the details.

SCHALL & RAUCH

Map pp154-5 Guesthouse €€

☎ 443 3970; www.schall-und-rauch.de, in German; Gleimstrasse 23, Prenzlauer Berg; s/d €45/83, incl breakfast; 📍 📍 Schönhauser Allee

This well-established guesthouse above the eponymous café (p258) has huge, sunny rooms, some with plank floors and brick walls, all with private bathrooms (ask for the one with the extra deep tub).

TOM'S HOTEL Map p136

Hotel €€

☎ 2196 6604; www.toms-hotel.de; Motzstrasse 19, Schöneberg; s/d from €79/99; 📍 Nollendorfpfad

This scene dinosaur is in no danger of dying out, especially since growing into a 60-room hotel with jazzy, modern décor and nifty perks like free wi-fi, fruit and mineral water. A nice touch: the 'Hotel Pass' for discounts at gay spots around town.

FURTHER RESOURCES MEDIA

Blattgold (www.blattgold-berlin.de, in German)

This is a monthly publication with tips and listings for women, available at women-oriented cafés and venues.

Blu Magazine (www.blu.fm, in German) Print and online magazine with searchable, up-to-the-minute location and event listings.

L-Mag (www.l-mag.de, in German) Bimonthly magazine for lesbians.

Out in Berlin (www.out-in-berlin.de) Published by the Siegestsäule folks, this English/German booklet and website is an indispensable guide to the queer scene in town. It's usually available at [Berlin Infostores](#) (p311).

Siegestsäule (www.siegestsaule.de, in German) This weekly freebie magazine is the bible for all things gay and lesbian in Berlin.

ORGANISATIONS

Lesbenberatung (Lesbian Support Centre; Map p136;

☎ 215 2000; www.lesbenberatung-berlin.de, in German; Kulmer Strasse 20a, Schöneberg;

📅 10am-7pm Mon, Tue & Thu, to 5pm Wed & Fri;

📍 📍 (Yorkstrasse) Great resource with psychological and social support, a café, lesbo mags and information about parties.

Mann-0-Meter (Map p136; ☎ 216 8008; Bülowstrasse 106, Schöneberg; 📍 Nollendorfpfad) One-stop information centre. Also operates a hotline to report attacks on gays (☎ 216 3336; 📅 5-7pm).

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Schwulenberatung (Gay Support Centre; [Map pp122–3](#); ☎ 2336 9070; www.schwulenberatungberlin.de; Mommsenstrasse 45, Charlottenburg; 🕒 9am–8pm Mon–Fri; 📍 Adenauerplatz)

TOURS

Berlinagenten (☎ 4372 0701; www.berlinagenten.de) Customised gay lifestyle tours (nightlife, shopping and culinary).

WEBSITES

Berlin Gay Web (<http://berlin.gay-web.de>, in German) General portal to all things gay in Berlin.

Berlin Tourist Office (www.visit-berlin.de) Has an excellent section with up-to-date GLBT travel info. Click on the 'Berlin for' tab.

Girl Ports (www.girlports.com/lesbiantravel/destinations/berlin) Lesbian travel magazine.

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